

NESTA DUNN EWAN

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A MEMOIR

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The History of Natural History has lost another champion. Although she was most often in the background, those of us who were fortunate enough to know the Ewans were always aware that Nesta's contributions to Joe's writing were indispensable. She was a meticulous researcher spending days tracking down the most minute details. Hers was the final authority on matters of grammar, style, and punctuation.

Born near Saskatoon, in Saskatchewan, Canada, Nesta with her family moved to California where she attended the University of California at Los Angeles, earned a degree in botany in 1933, and met another young botanist, Joseph Ewan, whom she married in Reno, Nevada in 1935. They produced three daughters, Kathleen Harris of Mandeville, Louisiana who with her husband Dick did so much to make their latter years enjoyable, Dorothy Nemecek of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Marjorie Ewan who now lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. All share their parents love of nature, if not book collecting, and have happy memories of family camping trips. There are five grandchildren.

During their next 64 years together the Ewans also produced nearly 500 titles. Beginning in 1963 with "John Lyon, Nurseryman and Plant Hunter, and his Journal, 1799–1814" published in the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society (n.s. 53:pt.2.), Nesta was frequently listed as co-author. Her participation was more widely recognized after "Ewania: the writings of Joe and Nesta Ewan" was published in 1989 (The American Botanist, Booksellers, Chillicothe, Illinois).

During their 40 years at Tulane, Nesta was famous for providing fabulous Sunday brunches to generations of graduate students. David White, now Professor of Biology at Loyola University, fondly remembers devouring stacks of buckwheat cakes loaded with jams and jellies, a tradition which continued after the Ewans moved to the Missouri Botanical Garden in Saint Louis.

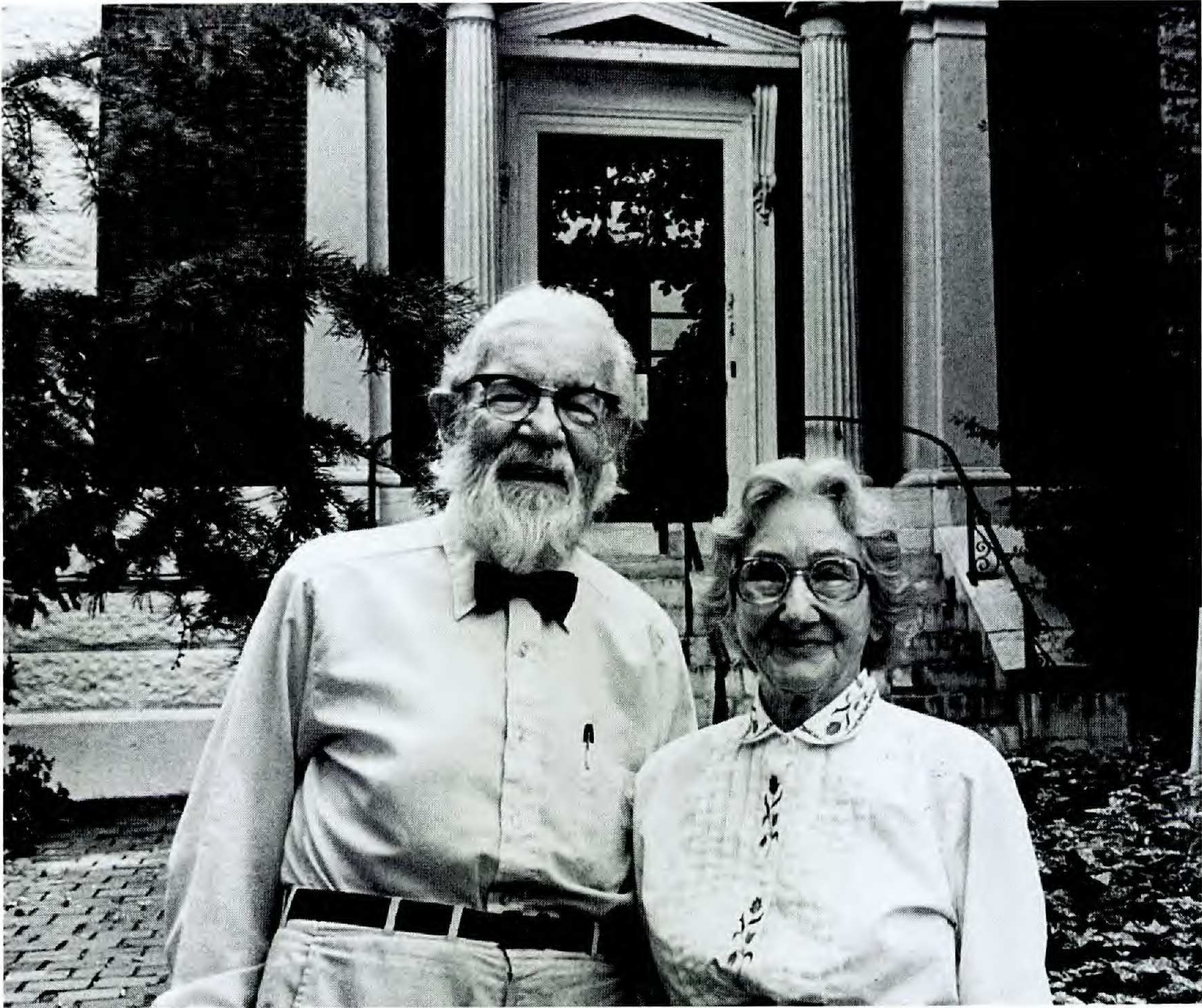
Once established in the old Museum building where they had palatial quarters and for the first time ample space for their burgeoning library, Nesta told me "When I die I don't have to go to heaven, I am already there." Joe and Nesta were both great lovers of plants, animals, and the great outdoors, and they reveled in the morning walks through the splendor of the Gardens. So while we at Tulane missed them sorely, we were glad indeed that they had found a wonderful place to continue their studies.



Nesta Dunn Ewan
May 1994
Mandeville, Louisiana

A lasting tribute was made to the couple in 1994 when they were jointly presented the Henry Shaw Medal by the Garden for their many contributions to botany and the history of science.

Small in stature, Nesta was a giant of a woman. A true personification of the adage "Behind every great man, there is an equally great woman." We shall not see her like again soon.



**Nesta and Joe Ewan
September 1994**